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Sunday Worship: 8:45 am - Orthros: 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Office Hours - 10 am to 4 pm

Rev. Fr. Symeon Williams
frsymeon@saintsophiachurch.org
Metropolis of New Jersey



HE IS RISEN

April 20, 2025
GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA



GOSPEL READING
John 20:19-25

Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace *be* with you." When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained."

Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."



**Χριστός
Ανέστη!**

GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

Mary Magdalene, and the other women who were present at the burial of our Saviour on Friday evening, returned from Golgotha to the city and prepared fragrant spices and myrrh, so that they might anoint the body of Jesus. On the morrow, because of the law which forbids work on the day of the Sabbath, they rested for the whole day. But at early dawn on the Sunday that followed, almost thirty-six hours since the death of the Life-giving Redeemer, they came to the sepulchre with the spices to anoint His body. While they were considering the difficulty of rolling away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, there was a fearful earthquake; and an Angel, whose countenance shone like lightning and whose garment was white as snow, rolled away the stone and sat upon it. The guards that were there became as dead from fear and took to flight. The women, however, went into the sepulchre, but did not find the Lord's body. Instead, they saw two other Angels in the form of youths clothed in white, who told them that the Saviour was risen, and they sent forth the women, who ran to proclaim to the disciples these gladsome tidings. Then Peter and John arrived, having learned from Mary Magdalene what had come to pass, and when they entered the tomb, they found only the winding sheets. Therefore, they returned again to the city with joy, as heralds now of the supernatural Resurrection of Christ, Who in truth was seen alive by the disciples on this day on five occasions.

Our Lord, then, was crucified, died, and was buried on Friday, before the setting of the sun, which was the first of His "three days" in the grave; observing the mystical Sabbath, that "seventh day" in which it is said that the Lord "rested from all His works" (Gen. 2:2-3), He passed all of Saturday in the grave; and He arose "while it was yet dark, very early in the morning" on Sunday, the third day, which, according to the Hebrew reckoning, began after sunset on Saturday.

As we celebrate today this joyous Resurrection, we greet and embrace one another in Christ, thereby demonstrating our Saviour's victory over death and corruption, and the destruction of our ancient enmity with God, and His reconciliation toward us, and our inheritance of life everlasting. The feast itself is called Pascha, which is derived from the Hebrew word which means "passover"; because Christ, Who suffered and arose, has made us to pass over from the curse of Adam and slavery to the devil and death unto our primal freedom and blessedness. In addition, this day of this particular week, which is the first of all the rest, is dedicated to the honour of the Lord; in honour and remembrance of the Resurrection, the Apostles transferred to this day the rest from labour that was formerly assigned to the Sabbath of the ancient Law.

All foods allowed during Renewal Week.



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In memory of our loved ones who have passed away
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In memory of Vangjush Nasi *and* Phidella Natale

In memory of my beloved husband George and my dear son Steven *and*

In honor of my daughter Elaine and my niece Mary

In memory of Ruth Andrews Nikas, Bill & Carolyn Ruhl, Alexandros & Despina Tsinikas,

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In memory of Pauline Papadakes

In memory of Peter Kostomite and Nicholas Papadimitriou

In honor of our mom, Bessie Neofotistos, *and*

In honor of our children -- Aram Christopher, Georgeanne, and Thomas

In memory of Aris and Harriet Podotas *and*

In memory of Michael & Martha Poloway

In memory of Theodoros Kaltsidis

In memory of Anthony & Patricia Fafalios, Karissa Conner,

Albert Richie, Hasna Saoud, and Louis Imbrogno

In memory of my parents Matthew & Erifili Rodakis

In honor of my nouna, Linda Tripolitis

In memory of the Scandalios and Callipolites Families

In memory of our beloved family members

In memory of Anna, Mnostula, Christos, Harry and Despina

In memory of George J. Tripolitis, beloved father *and*

In honor of Zoey Cosette Kreiser, my new granddaughter

In memory of George Tripolitis

In memory of Speros & Olga Tsipras, Elias S. Tsipras, and Maria Tsipras

In memory of my husband Chris and my sister Anthroniki

In memory of Georgio & Vaia Baxevanidis





**GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL**

Prot. No. 135/2025

Archiepiscopal Encyclical on Great and Holy Pascha, 2025

Holy Pascha, 2025

Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America:

*You raised with Yourself the whole race of Adam,
when You arose from the tomb.
(Canon of Pascha, Ode 6)*

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!

When our Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead, not a single witness is recorded as having seen this most monumental event in the history of the human race. His crucifiers, who posted sentries to ensure that no one tampered with the seal that had been set upon the Stone that covered His tomb, only felt the earthquake and bore false witness against the truth of His Resurrection (Matthew 27:62-66). But the Lord had no need to break that seal or roll away any stone, for His Arising from the grave transcended all categories of human understanding. Rather, the earthquake and the stone's rolling away by the angel happened for the astonished guards, the myrrhbearers and His perplexed disciples.

The Church, in Her divinely inspired wisdom, has given us a picture of this moment with the icon that is simply named, "Anastasis." The most famous version of this icon in the world, which has inspired countless reproductions, is in the *Parecclesion* of the Chora Church in

Constantinople. Notably, it depicts the resplendent and risen Lord of Glory lifting Adam and Even out of their tombs by their wrists, and not their hands. This dramatic detail of humankind's rescue from death and Hades manifests that, as the Apostle Paul says, "by grace we are saved" (Ephesians 2:8). It is not by our efforts that Eternal Life is won for us. It is the Sacrifice of the Cross and its only possible conclusion – the Resurrection – that usher us into the Mansions of Heaven. God holds onto us with His fierce and glorious love! He will not let us go, and He does not depend on our strength to hold onto Him. For again, as the Apostle says, even "the weakness of God is mightier than any human power" (I Corinthians 1:25).

My dear Christians,

If this is how God loves us, how should we love one another? In this season of Pascha, when we sing: "let us forgive everything in the Resurrection" (*Doxastikon* of the Matins), what possible negativity could we hold on to? Rather, let us take hold of one another and lift up each other through love, compassion, forgiveness and mercy. For God lifted us up first, so that we might share the exaltation of love with everyone around us. Because only then can we sing with true integrity and unfettered joy the gladsome Paschal anthem:

*Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death,
and to those in the tombs He has granted life!*

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!

Holy Pascha 2025,



† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America



ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΚΗ ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ

Αριθμ. Πρωτ.: 135/2025

Αρχιεπισκοπική Έγκύκλιος για τὸ Ἅγιο Πάσχα.

Ἅγιο Πάσχα 2025

Πρὸς τοὺς Σεβασμιωτάτους καὶ Θεοφιλεστάτους Ἀρχιερεῖς, τοὺς Εὐλαβεστάτους Ἱερεῖς καὶ Διακόνους, τὶς Πρεσβυτέρες καὶ τὶς Διακόνισσες, τοὺς Μοναχοὺς καὶ τὶς Μοναχές, τοὺς Προέδρους καὶ τὰ Μέλη τῶν Κοινοτικῶν Συμβουλίων, τοὺς Ἐντιμολογιωτάτους Ἄρχοντες τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἡγεσίας τῶν 100, τὰ Ἡμερήσια καὶ Ἀπογευματινὰ Σχολεῖα, τὶς Φιλοπτώχους Ἀδελφότητες, τὴ Νεολαία, τὶς Ἑλληνορθόδοξες Ὄργανώσεις καὶ ὁλόκληρο τὸ Χριστεπώνυμο πλήρωμα τῆς Ἱερᾶς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Ἀμερικῆς.

«Συνανέστησας παγγενῆ τὸν Ἀδάμ, ἀναστὰς ἐκ τοῦ τάφου».

(Κανόνας τοῦ Πάσχα, ὠδή 6^η).

Προσφιλεῖς ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφές ἐν τῷ ἀναστάντι Χριστῷ,

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη!

Τὸ μέγιστο γεγονός ἐστὶν ἡ ἱστορία τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου γένους, δηλαδὴ ἡ ἀνάστασις ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν τοῦ Κυρίου μας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ συντελέσθηκε χωρὶς τὴν παρουσίαν μαρτύρων τῆ νύχτα ἐκείνη. Οἱ σταυρωτὲς του, ποὺ ἔβαλαν φρουροὺς γιὰ νὰ σιγουρευτοῦν ὅτι κανεὶς δὲν θὰ ἀγγίξει τὸν σφραγισμένον λίθον ποὺ σκέπαζε τὸν τάφον του, ἐνίωσαν μόνον τὸν σεισμὸν καὶ ἔδωσαν ψευδῆ μαρτυρία γιὰ τὰ γεγονότα ἐκείνης τῆς νύχτας (Ματθ. κζ' 62-66). Ὅμως ὁ ἀναστημένος Κύριος δὲν χρειαζόταν νὰ ἀποκλιῆσει τὸν λίθον καὶ νὰ παραβιάσει τὴν σφραγίδα, καθὼς ἡ ἀνάστασις του ὑπερβαίνει κάθε ἀνθρώπινον λογικὴν κατανόησιν. Ὁ σεισμὸς ἐγένετο καὶ ὁ λίθος ἀποκλιῆσθη ἀπὸ τὸν ἄγγελον ἀποκλειστικὰ καὶ μόνον γιὰ τοὺς ἀποσβολωμένους στρατιῶτας, τὶς μυροφόρας καὶ τοὺς ἀπορημένους μαθητὰς του.

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία, μὲ τὴ θεόπνευστη σοφία της, μᾶς προσφέρει μίᾳ ἀναπαράστασι ἀυτῆς τῆς στιγμῆς στὴν εἰκόνα ποὺ φέρει τὸν τίτλο «ἡ ἀνάστασις». Ἡ διασημότερη ἐκδοχὴ ἀυτῆς τῆς εἰκόνας παγκοσμίως, ἡ ὁποία ἔχει ἐμπνεύσει ἀναρίθμητα ἀντίγραφα, βρῖσκεται στὸ παρεκκλήσιο τῆς Μονῆς τῆς Χώρας στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη. Ἐκεῖ, ὁ ἔνδοξος καὶ ἀναστημένος Κύριος τῆς Δόξης ἀνασύρει τὸν Ἀδὰμ καὶ τὴν Εὐὰ ἀπὸ τοὺς τάφους τους, κρατώντας τους ὄχι ἀπὸ τὸ χέρι, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τὸν καρπὸ. Ἀυτὴ ἡ δραματικὴ λεπτομέρεια τῆς λύτρωσης τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀπὸ τὸ θάνατο καὶ τὸν Ἄδη δείχνει, ὅπως λέει ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος, ὅτι «τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι» (Ἐφ. 2, 8). Διότι δὲν ἀπόκειται στὴ δική μας προσπάθεια νὰ κερδίσουμε τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ. Εἶναι ἡ θυσία τοῦ σταυροῦ μὲ κατάληξή της τὴν ἀνάστασι, ἡ ὁποία μᾶς εἰσάγει στὶς μονὲς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Ὁ Θεὸς μᾶς κρατᾷ μὲ φωτεινὴ καὶ δυνατὴ ἀγάπη! Δὲ μᾶς ἀφήνει νὰ φύγουμε ἀπὸ κοντὰ του καὶ δὲν ἐξαρτᾶται ἀπὸ τὴν δική μας δύναμη γιὰ νὰ κρατηθοῦμε κοντὰ του. Γιατί, ὅπως ξαναλέει ὁ ἀπόστολος, «τὸ ἀσθενὲς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἰσχυρότερον τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐστὶ» (Α΄ Κορ. 1, 25).

Ἀγαπητοὶ μου χριστιανοί,

Ἐὰν ἔτσι μᾶς ἀγαπᾷ ὁ Θεός, πῶς ἄραγε ἐμεῖς ὀφείλουμε νὰ ἀγαπᾶμε ἀλλήλους; Τὴν περίοδο τοῦ Πάσχα, ὅταν ψάλλουμε: «Συγχωρήσωμεν πάντα τῇ ἀναστάσει» (Δοξαστικὸ τοῦ ὄρθρου τῆς ἑορτῆς), πῶς μπορούμε νὰ ἔχουμε ἀρνητικὰ συναισθήματα γιὰ τοὺς ἄλλους; Ἄς κρατηθοῦμε ὁ ἕνας ἀπὸ τὸν ἄλλον καὶ ἄς ἀνυψώσουμε ἀλλήλους μὲ ἀγάπη, συμπόνια, συγχώρησι καὶ ἔλεος. Διότι ὁ Θεὸς πρῶτος μᾶς ἀνύψωσε, ὥστε νὰ μοιρασθοῦμε τὴν ὑψωσι ἀυτῆς τῆς ἀγάπης μὲ ὅλους γύρω μας. Μόνον τότε μπορούμε νὰ ψάλλουμε μὲ πληρότητα καὶ ἀνεκλάλητη χαρὰ τὸν θριαμβευτικὸ πασχάλιο ὕμνο:

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν,
θανάτῳ θάνατον πατήσας,
καὶ τοῖς ἐν τοῖς μνήμασι
ζωὴν χαρισάμενος.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!



† ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐλπιδοφόρος